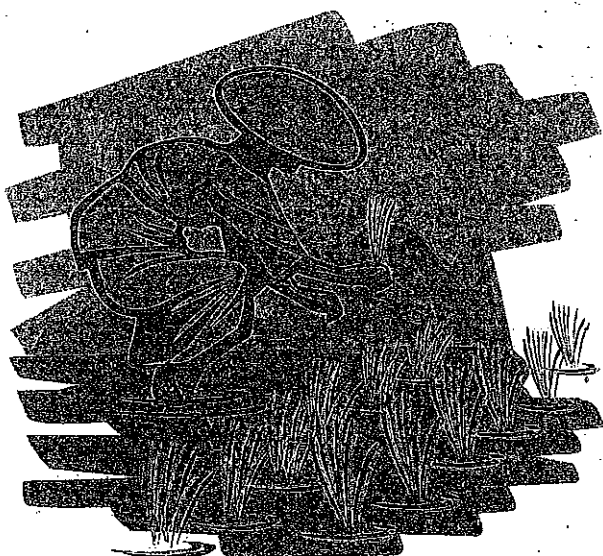




Food of the Northern Indian Subcontinent



The northern Indian subcontinent is bordered by one of the world's highest mountain ranges—the Himalaya. On the broad and grassy foothills, sheep graze. Farmers in Pakistan and Nepal produce broadleaf vegetables, such as cauliflower and spinach. In Bangladesh, the rivers and coastline are sources of fish and shellfish.

Religious Beliefs and Traditions

Just as the geographic features influence people's diets, so do religious beliefs and traditions. With Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jews, and Buddhists all living in this region, the religious influences are ancient, diverse, and complex.

The two greatest cultural influences on Indian cooking and food habits are the Hindu and the Muslim traditions. Many Hindus are vegetarians as a matter of religious practice. Muslims of Pakistan and Bangladesh do not eat pork, but they do eat other meats that have been slaughtered according to proper Muslim tradition.

Land of Spices and Rice

Connecting the foods of this diverse region are two essential ingredients: spices and rice. For thousands of years, the people of this ancient and rich civilization have been growing and blending their own spices such as peppers, chilies, turmeric, ginger, cardamom, and coriander. Interestingly, the term *curry*, synonymous with this region's food, does not always refer to a spice. It can refer also to the spicy stew-like preparation of meats and vegetables that is served with rice.

Taking Another Look

Directions: Answer the questions below on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What two religious groups have exerted the most influence on the cuisine and diets of the northern Indian subcontinent?
2. By trying the flavorful recipes on the following page, you can create an entire meal. What spices that are typically added to foods in this region are included in these recipes?



Global Gourmet

Agricultural scientists continue to try to improve rice production. In 1992 Indian scientists developed a purple-leafed rice plant meant to stand out from weeds, to be simpler to harvest. Unfortunately, the weeds became hybrids of the rice plant and scientists developed something they had not expected – a purple-leafed weed.

Regional Recipes



dessert



salad



side dish



soup



main dish



snack



vegetarian



drink



Curried Meat Patties (Pakistan)

(serves 2 to 4)

Ingredients

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 lb. ground beef | 1 green pepper, finely chopped |
| 1 egg | 3 tbsp. vegetable oil |
| 2 tsp. curry powder | 1 onion, thinly sliced |
| juice of half a lemon | 1 tbsp. cilantro, chopped |

Procedure

Put the meat, egg, curry powder, lemon juice, and green pepper in a bowl. Mix these ingredients into a smooth paste. Divide the mixture into four patties, each 1/2-inch thick. Heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the patties and reduce the heat to medium. Fry the patties about 8 minutes on each side or until brown and cooked through. Put the patties on a serving platter and decorate with the slices of onion and chopped cilantro.



Boiled Rice (entire region)

(serves 4)

Ingredients

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1 cup long-grain rice, such as basmati | 6 cups water |
|--|--------------|

Procedure

Bring the water to boil in a large saucepan. Add the rice, stirring constantly. Lower heat to medium and cook uncovered for 15 minutes. Stir the rice once or twice to keep it from sticking to the pan. When the rice starts to puff up, drain off the water by pouring the rice and water mixture through a fine-sieved strainer. Pour the rice back into the saucepan and lower the heat to very low. Cover the saucepan and cook for five minutes. Put the rice in a bowl and serve.



Spicy Chickpeas (Pakistan)

(serves 4)

Ingredients

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2 to 4 tbsp. butter or margarine | 1/2 tsp. ground or crushed red pepper |
| 1 onion, finely chopped | 1 cup canned chickpeas |
| 1 tsp. curry powder | 1 tsp. sugar |
| 1 tsp. ground cumin | salt and pepper to taste |
| 1/2 tsp. ground ginger | |

Procedure

Drain the liquid from the can of chickpeas and set aside 1/2 cup of the liquid. Heat 2 tablespoons butter or margarine in a large, heavy frying pan. Add onion and fry over medium heat for about 5 minutes, or until the onion is golden brown. Add curry powder, cumin, ginger, and red pepper. Mix well in the pan. Reduce heat to low. Add the chickpeas, the drained chickpea liquid, sugar, and salt and pepper to taste. If the mixture seems sticky, add 1 or 2 more tablespoons of butter or margarine. Cook for about five minutes.



Chopped Cucumber Salad (Nepal)

(serves 4)

Ingredients

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1 large cucumber, peeled and finely chopped | 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice |
| 1 large onion, finely chopped | 1 cup cilantro, chopped |
| 1 large tomato, finely chopped | salt to taste |

Procedure

Place the diced cucumber, onion, and tomato into medium-sized bowl. Add lemon juice, cilantro, and salt to taste. Mix well. Cover with plastic wrap. Chill in the refrigerator for two hours before serving.